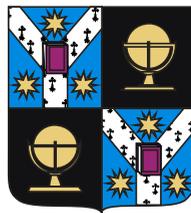


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Facultatea de Geografie și Geologie
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Université Lumière Lyon 2
Ecole Doctorale 483 ScSo
Géographie, aménagement et urbanisme



Ph.D. Thesis (summary)

The interstitial cities of Romania

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Iași
2012

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Introduction

The concepts of *territorial interstices*, *espaces d'entre-deux*, *intermediate spaces* are relatively new, as they have not been the subject of any baseline studies on the yet. However, these concepts illustrate the increasing interest of urban geography toward the hybrid dynamics and spatial forms specific to the contemporary scientific paradigm resulting from the context of current human civilization, described by some epistemologists as postmodern. By employing these concepts, this paper studies a former communist space which strives to balance the relationship between the past communist period and the present postmodern era. In this respect, the following reflections will be useful for our study:

“To understand the current urban transformations in Central and Eastern Europe, it is necessary to understand its past. Therefore “the socialist city” can not currently be avoided if we are to decipher the “post-socialist” city. These expressions involve the adherence to the identity of a socialist city, this issue fuelling an entire debate in the humanities and social sciences in the 1970s (...).

Socialist city: these two terms put together establish a relationship between a spatial entity and an ideological, political, economic and social system. It is also assumed that the legacy of the socialist administration implemented for half a century (or more in the case of cities in the countries of the former USSR) has left several traces in the landscape, forms – the material structures of the city –, as well as in the behavior of the politic, social and economic body to produce in these cities a set of similarities stronger than the forces of differentiation inherited from previous periods or due to the geographical context.”¹

Presenting the national context is a first step in analyzing the Romanian urban system. A second step consists of identifying

¹ Coudroy de Lille, L. (coord.) (2009) – *Relire la ville socialiste*, in *Histoire Urbaine*, no.25, août 2009, Paris, Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, p. 5-6.

intra-urban differences. The Romanian urban system, as any other urban system, presents two situations: *centers* are associated with large cities, or cities in general, *peripheries* are regions and localities that are located (spatially) in marginal / marginalized positions and lack the strengths of centers, including especially rural and small urban settlements.

In fact, small towns have a crucial role within the regional and national urban network: they are complementary to large cities, constituting their substitute in the territory and concentrating first necessity services. For more elaborate services, customers are obliged to travel to large cities, but for everyday problems there are solutions in small towns/villages. Thus, one can analyze the role and functioning of large cities that are regional and national centers and also those of small towns, which serve in turn as local centers for the surrounding countryside with industries and services that may be sufficient for a population less numerous and for less demanding clients. This is analogous to the situation presented by F. Nadou (2010), for whom small towns are reminiscent of “intermediate cities as cities of tomorrow,” as the territory develops through them, while metropolises are “busy” with global development.

“The existence in certain points of the geographical space of large economies will lead to the concentration in these areas of a high production of low-priced goods to be sold in the surrounding areas. Prospective purchasers, in order to lower their transport expenses, will travel to the nearest place that can provide the desired goods. Therefore, each of the goods or services offered has a certain radius of attraction to customers. The radius of the influence area of each city thus becomes the main factor of differentiation between producers. The radius of the influence area is small for inferior goods (each village centre has, for example, a bakery) and becomes all the greater as the desired product is of higher order (each county capital has a car dealership; each province capital has a truck sales centre, etc.). Concentrating producers in places where large scale economies were originally located leads to economies of agglomeration. As a natural consequence, these places become cities, evenly distributed in

the territory in order to capture the maximum of customers. Such urban centers are ranked according to the order of the goods and service provided: small towns will be more numerous and provide low-order goods and services and large cities will be less numerous and provide high-order goods. (...) The model built by W. Christaller has as a main weakness the fact that the balance of the influence areas of each city is a static, rigid balance, which means that it can be verified in practice only for a limited number of cases.”² On the other hand, “the postmodern reading of this type of spatial organization is based on reduction up to extinction of the control or influence over the area of polarization and achieving direct contacts between centers with the same interests (*hubs and spokes*).”³ Among these areas of influence there are areas that are affected sporadically by several neighborhood centers, which do not belong to any of them. Human settlements found in these areas have a peripheral status, being polarized by several centers simultaneously.

Small and medium towns, even if they are part of the lower echelon of the urban hierarchy, “the poor relation of research in urban geography” (J.-Ch. Edouard, 2012), are important in the decentralization of services and the development of local territory.

The subject finds its applications in both science, by identifying a new category of urban settlements, and in politics and decision-making, as the study can provide a diagnostic of the Romanian urban system.

² Groza, O., Țurcănașu, G., Rusu, Al. (2005) – *Geografie economică mondială*, Iași, Ed. Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, p. 16-17.

³ Groza, O. (2003) – *Despre geografie și spațiu*, în *Lost in Space*, Ioan, A. (dir.) p. 217.

Chapter 1. Introductory elements – the organization and the direction of researches

The thesis of this paper states that *urban settlements* located in *weakly polarized areas* of the Romanian urban network (unfavorable geographical position – away from the main axes of communication) are in an *interstitial* position, and this fact negatively influences their development: negative natural balance and negative migratory balance, aging and demographic exodus, poor public utilities, minimal services. At the same time, *the interstitial space* may also be equivalent with a stable, self-sufficient space, “a place where nothing happens” (M. Sadoveanu), this stability having, however, a slight negative connotation, as an unattractive place for investors, including for tourism, lacking in interest and resources and therefore subject to high unemployment and routine.

Urban settlements found in *interstitial areas* delineated by different mathematical models or those that are below the national average of other cities in terms of urban functions and utilities can be called *interstitial cities*. On the other hand, it should also be observed the situation when, despite all these negative aspects, the status of interstitial city does not exclude positive elements (stability, self-sufficiency, high environmental quality).

The major objectives of the research are:

- Demonstrating the adequacy or inadequacy of the key concepts (interstitial city, interstitial space) in the context of theories of urban polarization, urban systems / networks, spatial planning and sustainable development.
- Analyzing the Romanian urban system in terms of demonstrating the existence or nonexistence of interstitial cities.
- Identifying the problems specific to interstitial cities and therefore the specific requirements within the strategies for implementing national / European spatial planning policies.

This paper was prepared based on hypotheses formulated a priori and confronted with research results. The basic concept employed is that of *interstice* / *interstitial*, which, by definition, means:

- *interstițiu, interstiții, s.n. Spațiu (gol) situat între părțile unui corp sau ale unui sistem de corpuri aflate unul lângă altul pe o anumită porțiune din suprafața lor, fără a se atinge [interstice, interstices, n. (empty) space located between parts of a body or a system of bodies placed side by side on a certain portion of their surface without touching]; luft. – From French interstice, Latin interstitium.*
- *interstițial, -ă, interstițiali, -e, adj. Care se află într-un interstițiu, care provine dintr-un interstițiu sau se referă la interstițiu. ♦ Țesut interstițial = țesut conjunctiv care se află între elementele în funcție ale unui organ, formând masa lui principală [interstitial, adj. Within an interstice, of or pertaining to an interstice. ♦ Interstitial tissue = connective tissue between the cellular elements of an organ, forming its main mass]. – From French interstițial.*

Source: Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române [Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language]

The working hypotheses are the following:

1. The term *interstitial* exists in urbanism and spatial planning only at micro-territorial level, with a negative connotation. Can this term also be applied for a national urban network, with the same meaning?
2. Theoretically, polarized areas of major cities, according to theoretical models do not take into account natural barriers (landforms) and human (administrative, social, economic) barriers and are more attractive than unpolarized areas. Is this theoretical situation found in reality?
3. Interstitial cities do not have all the urban functions

territory necessary for the polarized area and do not comply with the National Spatial Plan (NSP, Section IV).

4. This term, *interstitial*, is used to emphasize the negative context certain cities can be found. Could another term (intermediate, entre-deux, Zwischenstadt, shrinking region) be used?

“To characterize postmodern geography is difficult. One can start with what it is not. It does not use statistics, or mathematical tools or models developed by spatial analysis. It also refuses a naive empiricism according to which facts speak for themselves or a rationalism in seeking the alleged universal laws. (...) Postmodern geography is reflexive and likes language games, games of meaning, of representations in constructing and understanding reality. It means, according to J. Derrida (...) to operate a deconstruction of the discourse: it would have no solid, stable meaning, it transmits something different than it seems, the categories used may be re-discussed.”⁴ Specifically, postmodern geography supports relativism and denounces the universalist claim of a dominant discourse, focusing on revaluing non-dominant discourses.

This paper is not postmodern in the true sense of the word, yet postmodernity is mentioned in our research to understand the context in which the current processes of *marginalization – interstitiality* develop.

“The postmodernist approach is characterized not so much by the subject it deals with as by the way in which it treats it” (J.-F. Staszak, 2001). From this point of view, the work can be regarded as postmodern because it is not focused on the cities in Romania according to the classic monograph model (settlement, development, socio-economic characteristics), but on, first, the definition and delineation of “the competencies” of the concepts

⁴ Staszak, J.-F. (2001) (coord.) – *Les enjeux de la géographie anglo-saxonne*, in Staszak, J.-F. et al. *Géographies anglo-saxonnes. Tendances contemporaines*, Paris, Belin, p. 13.

(interstitial space, intermediate space, *Zwischenstadt* – *between cities*, *Zwischenraum* – *between spaces*, *entre-deux*) that characterize those situations, then on the delimitation of *the polarization areas of the county / regional urban centers* and on *the territorial effects* caused by the influence and interactions of the polarization areas, effects visible in territorial development (of the subordinated urban and rural settlements), in order to trace the network of urban influences and interstices, “the empty spaces”, influenced to a limited extent. Then *the characteristics of urban settlements “suspected” of having interstitial quality* are examined (determining the relationships between localization in interstitial and underdeveloped areas, granting the urban status, socio-economic characteristics that accentuate the peripheral features of those settlements).

The term *interstitial* will be used with caution because its meaning is not yet fully accepted in urban geography. The choice thereof is motivated by its similarity with the meaning of *interstitial* as defined in architecture.

For conceptual clarifications and improvement of the analytical methods, the following steps will be taken:

- Systematic research of international literature to identify the structural axes of research on intermediarity / interstitiality (ENS and Denis Diderot libraries in Lyon).

- Systematic research of national bibliography to identify the beginning of the local interest in this problem.

- Use of the existing database at the research centre CUGUAT-TIGRIS from the Department of Geography of the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iasi (Director – PhD Prof. Octavian Groza).

- Application of the quantitative methods and models of analysis, diagnosis and prognosis of territorial systems; improving the use of these methods in the BioGéophile research centre at ENS Lyon (Director – PhD Prof. Lydia Coudroy de Lille).

- Critical analysis of the National Spatial Plan in terms of the doctoral research on interstitial cities.

We use the term “interstitial cities” and not that of “intermediate cities” because of the definitions of the two terms:

- *Intermediate* = status in a hierarchy, being between two states, with a rather positive connotation, some authors emphasizing that this is a privileged position, of territorial node (Nadou, 2010);
- *Interstitial* = extension (confirmed or infirmed) in the territory of the definition given by the architecture: peripheral spatial localization, insignificant place characterized by disorder, lack of project and negative state of affairs.

The entire *methodological set* will be developed according to *the deductive approach*, starting from a general level (development of a theoretical construct then confronted with reality). This method involves four stages: choosing the issues and phenomena for study, formulating working hypotheses and ing a theoretical explanation of the phenomena, confronting the hypotheses with reality, and concluding, by removing, accepting or changing the hypotheses and the theory that supports them. The chosen *scientific discourse* is *nomothetic*, based on identifying similarities, order, unity, and studying general mechanisms. Of course, to a lesser extent, the classical paradigm is also used in employing *the inductive method* and *idiographic discourse* (based on identifying the differences, regional originalities, uniqueness, study of regional specificities).

The methodology used is designed to bring new information on the concepts and issues of unpolarized spaces within the urban environment in Romania. Unpolarized areas were chosen as subject for study (if the hypotheses are validated, these areas, including those cities, will be called in the end *interstitial*) cut from the polarized areas of regional metropolises, then from all county capital cities, and then all the cities over 100,000 inhabitants, including three old urban centers (Roman, Bârlad, Hunedoara). This scale of analysis is, on the one hand, sufficiently detailed (polarization areas of regional metropolises would leave out including county capitals which can not be said to have a negative situation because

there are not theoretically polarized) and, on the other hand, sufficiently relevant (e.g. a study of unpolarized areas, located between the polarization areas of municipalities would not have been relevant because it would only take into account the demographic factor, whereas many Romanian municipalities and towns do not meet the necessary conditions for their status).

Our theme of study adopted the concept of *interstitial* because we can not apply *a priori* on Romanian cities a classification built in other territorial contexts. Our research will attempt to prove whether these cities are in a position of *Zwischenstadt*, of *Zwischenraum*, *espace intermédiaire* or *d'entre-deux* (concepts already formalized in Western Europe) or if they are in a particular case that could very well be called *interstitial*. The crucial aspect that will define these cities as *interstitial* is not the population size (this aspect is only a first analysis filter) but functionality coupled with the degree of compliance with the NSP indicators.

This paper studies the issue of weakly polarized cities focusing on processes spatially rather than territorially (this second dimension of analysis requires large sociological surveys that can only be achieved at national level in a much larger study).

- It should be noted that our research will focus only on the urban environment (it is known that there are also villages that have urban characteristics, as well as towns with a strong rural quality).
- The situation of cities will be analyzed by reference to the NSP (National Spatial Plan, Section IV), comparing results among towns with a view to determining the cities that do not meet the criteria for town / city status.

Areas of influence can not be determined only on purely statistical bases; subjective choice and customer needs are fundamental. The theoretical models applied to determine the polarized areas, and, thus, the interstitial spaces will be those used by Thiessen, Reilly, Huff and the interaction model, the method used is that of “bird’s-eye view”. This *vol d’oiseau* view is beneficial in

seeing the whole, impossible to distinguish otherwise. “The bird’s-eye view perspective mediates between what the human eye sees and what the divine eye sees. Looking from above, (...) there is no hiding except the opacity of a building or in the bowels of the earth. The obliquity of this view shyly shows the impossibility of absolute control over the reality inspected. The bird’s-eye view perspective is soft. As it is not a faceted view, like the one proposed by Cubists, which would overlap in a single representation various perspectives on the object, many details remain hidden by what rejects, through opacity, the piercing view. There are always shadow cones, of relative invisibility in the eye/lens (...).”⁵

The indicators used to identify and analyze interstitial spaces are those implemented by the *National Spatial Plan (NSP), Section IV – Settlements Network*. After analyzing and mapping those indicators where data access is possible, the rank sum method is applied, taking into account the above indicators, a method that synthesizes the degree of fulfillment of all the criteria necessary for a town or city to earn their status. Thus, a typology of Romanian cities will be developed. Then, the cities with the lowest scores will be determined and they will be analyzed using other indicators to confirm or infirm the hypothesis that those are interstitial cities:

- Demographic indicators (total population and its numerical evolution, natural mobility and natural balance, territorial mobility and migration balance, demographic aging index);
- Indicators of the concentrated urban functions (finance function, administration function);

Intermediate or mid-sized towns (medium size) are first of all difficult to define in terms of population, researchers admitting a maximum of 500,000 inhabitants. F. Santamaria (1998) believes that medium cities (*les villes moyennes*) up to 200,000 people, are designed to enliven and develop the national territory given that,

⁵ A. Ioan (2003) apud *Teritorii : scrieri și descrieri*, O. Groza (coord.), p. 21

through globalization, the major urban centers tend to look outwards, neglecting the national territory. To become support points in spatial planning, intermediate cities “must find new bases on which to found their future. To do this, they can, if not produce innovation, at least try to capture and interpret it to their own advantage. This is achieved by inserting them in the new relationships of specializations, exchanges and complementarities. Such relationships should be facilitated by the globalization movement which favours infra-national spatial organizations, such as industrial districts. The neologism *glocalization* expresses this reality that reconciles the best performing organization at the level of infra-national institutions and competitiveness in international markets.”⁶

The use of the term *intermediate* along with *interstitial*, although it could lead to terminological confusion, is justified by the difference between the two and the fact that *intermediate* cities are most likely to be *interstitial* too.

There are numerous studies on urban networks conducted in human geography laboratories in the country (I. Ianoș, Al. Ungureanu, I. Muntele, G. Țurcănașu, V. Cucu, etc.) and abroad (D. Pumain, L. Sanders, N. Cattin, K. Emsellem, C. Ghorra-Gobin, etc.), but the concepts *interstitial city*, *territorial interstices*, *espaces d’entre-deux*, *intermediate spaces*, are relatively new.

Classic urban geography finds itself incapable to analyze current forms of organization of the systems of cities, which either ignores local scales to fit into the higher scales (*globalization*, *metropolitanisation*) or integrates itself in a unique way in localized territorial systems (*rurbanization*, *glocalization*, *self-centering*, *metropolitan areas*, etc.).

In this context, the concept of *intermediarity* was forged and defined as a “hybrid of geographical tissues, of territorial architecture seen in a double perspective: that of articulating the popular systems with the economic systems and that of articulating

⁶ Santamaria, F. (1998) – op. cit. p. 9

places with institutional territories” (Roth-Sallard, 2006). Called differently, depending on the ethno-linguistic area and the views of the authors (*Zwischenstadt* – between cities, *Zwischenraum* – between spaces, *espace intermédiaire* – intermediate space; *espaces d’entre-deux* – spaces *in-between*), spaces that not obey the classical canons of territorial organization prove very important for scientific reflection too, but especially for populations that are found somehow captive in these *between* spaces.

In the *BioGéophile* Laboratory, within the CNRS - UMR 5600, ENS Lyon, one of the research axes is called *Espaces intermédiaires et modèles européens*. This suggests that the notion of *intermediate space* should be studied as a *space* of articulation and mediation (rather than *territory*, because it can overcome political control processes, of collective integration) at different levels and in different ways: *geographically* (in the middle, at the articulation or *entre-deux* – between two clearly identified worlds); *historically* (between socialist legacies and uncertain future, between passive / active legacies and new political and socio-economic foundations), *typologically* (spaces set between different categories: rural and urban polarized space and peripheral space, rich and poor, developed and underdeveloped, which has a fluctuating level of interaction and involves discourses on the notions of *stability*, *territorial balance* and the time periods associated with them); there are studied processes through which this status – temporary or long-term – is acquired, produces particular / specific methods of spatial organization, most often based on better known general processes. This researches lead to logical spatial analyses where space is not a context element but a chief component of socio-territorial systems. The scientific approach is conducted by studying the dynamics and trajectories in a systemic perspective which takes into account the changes that occurs over time. Intermediate spaces deserve a new approach because, despite the important spatial expansion, they have, by their very nature, low visibility, both in research and administration.

Eastern Europe and intermediate spaces were and are the object of study in terms of transition and re-composition of territorial

systems under research contracts and colloquia organized by ENS Lyon: *Refounding Territories: A New Administrative Geography in Eastern Europe* (January 2003), within one of the ARASSH programs (Agence Rhône-Alpes en Sciences Humaines et Sociales), *Penser les espaces intermédiaires en Europe* (October 2009).

Another research centre on *intermediate spaces* is CERAMAC (Centre d'Études et de Recherches Appliquées au Massif Central), within UFR Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines of Université Blaise Pascal (Clermont-Ferrand).

The marginal / marginalized areas have attracted a lot of names; a brief overview of some of them (with quite similar meanings) was conducted by H. Roth-Sallard (2006) in his PhD thesis titled *Espaces intermédiaires en recomposition. Les campagnes industrielles allemandes en région de frontière*:

- *Entre-deux* (spaces *between*) – term used by V. Rey (1992) to describe Median Europe.

- *Espaces intermédiaires* (*intermediate spaces*) – term used by J.-J. Bavoux (1993), E. Bonerandi (1999), E. Bonérandi, P.-A. Landel, M. Roux (2001), K. Emsellem (2006) – defined as non-peripheral areas, but unable to capitalize on their favourable spatial position; there are also considered spaces with a dominant rural characteristic, but which deserve to be taken into account for their potential. K. Emsellem (2006) specifies that these are spaces characterized by interface function, by their hybridity, by dynamism, by innovations and by potential conflicts.

- *Milieu intermédiaire* (*intermediate environment*) – used by Houssel (1995), who introduces the notion of *industrial district*, considered a special form of organization, both through its spatial position and the hybrid forms of existence, between urban and rural areas; “descendant of the proto-industrial regions established in rural areas by major cities, starting with the Renaissance, some districts have given rise to major urban agglomerations (Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing); other districts remained diffuse, with workshops

and factories scattered in villages and small towns; these regions are still characterized by dense population, a strong sense of identity, merging the two cultures, workers and peasants, the frequency of large families in which tasks are divided by generation, parents working on small farms and the young in the factory.”⁷

- *Tiers-espace (the third space)* used by M. Vanier (2002) and *Zwischenstadt (between cities)* used by Sieverts (since 1997) – “new form, mixed and diffuse between village and town characterizing the outskirts of major European agglomerations (...) spaces of diluted peri-urban between urban centers and rural peripheries or between two or more centers” (Hélène Roth, 2006).

- *Zwischenraum*⁸ (*between spaces*) – studies on this concept are conducted exclusively in the German area, only accessible to the Germanophones; this term has philosophical and social implications..

- *Interstitial* – relatively new term (the object of study of CERAMAC⁹ the delineation criteria are focused on underdevelopment and depopulation). The term *interstitial* is not used consistently in the geographical vocabulary, its meanings are in architecture and urbanism (residual space, worthless and without constructions), sociology, psychology. Perla Serfaty-Garzon (1991) defines interstitial spaces as anti-landscapes, “common, indifferent, ugly.” J. Kadi (CSPRP – Univ. Paris 7) believes that these are uncontrolled places where creativity flourishes. H. Hatzfeld (1997) defines *interstitial* as a marginal area, opposite to the major space of the city. H. Hatzfeld (2002) believes that “interstices are the product of conflicting movements, almost spasmodic of the

⁷ Houssel, J. P. (1995) – *Districts industriels et milieux intermédiaires*, in *Revue de Géographie de Lyon*, 1995-1, p. 7.

⁸ Das Institut für Konfliktmanagement - <http://www.zwischenraum.org/downloads/philosophie.pdf>

⁹ Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Appliquées au Massif Central

city on itself. Each of these spaces was part of the city, in a certain period (...), then their position in the city or in their own substance or even the activities developed there raised an opaque barrier to the rest of the city.” M. Hatzfeld (2006) associates these places with “where the homeless people live (*SDF – Sans Domicile Fixe*) and obstinately refuse to enter into normality”. S. De Rouffray (Univ. de Rouen) mentions the term “interstitial” in the presentation of her research themes, theme no. 2 is “Recomposing marginal territories”: “The margin can be conceived in terms of interface to scales and in different contexts (regional, infra-urban, rural-urban border area) or in terms of “a-centrality”, a kind of “entre-deux” in relation to the centers. The objectives are to identify a particular method of territorial operation, especially in relation to the model of “centre-periphery”, studying the rupture areas and “d’entre-deux” areas. Within territorial recompositions associated with Voynet and Chevènement laws, there were found numerous *interstitial areas*, left on their own, thus creating new forms of marginality, and it would be useful to analyze their various aspects. In the context of a cross-border space, this concept proves particularly operational”.¹⁰ G. Țurcănașu (2006) mentions the term *interstitial space*, as “periphery of a systemic organization, which can avoid the influences of the urban pole, where other centers of territorial control are emerging.” *Interstitial time*, in a hospital, designates those empty moments that are not directly devoted to medical activities but are before or after activities, previously known as *informal moments*, but now there is semantic movement towards the contemporary expression *interstitial*, with a wide conceptual opening. From *vague moments*, for exploring, perceiving and understanding space operation, to *areas of creativity*, to *transition-space*, *space of freedom*, *of creation*, *of restoration*,

¹⁰ UMR-IDEES - <http://www.umr-idees.fr/spip.php?article118>

of development, of adjustment, these moments, confusing sometimes and that give the impression of clutter are considered essential in developing representations of what was and what will be (P. Marciano, M. Benadiba, 2007). C. Guillaud (2009) estimated that these *interstitial spaces*, “empty, in transition, waiting” which appeared in the urban spatial and mental texture in the context of mutations occurring in post-industrial cities, after 1960, are “indeterminate and vague in nature”. Another approach to the term *interstitial* term is achieved in the work of D. Tudora (2010), referring to the areas of average polarization and rural settlements thereon, situated between the areas of polarization of the large urban centers, spaces “undecided between services” offered by several urban centers. In the paper “A World of interstices ...”, based on the data from the ESPON project Eurobroadmap, C. Didelon et al. (2011) through mental maps and using the method of fuzzy logic (Eng. *fuzzy*, Fr. *floue*) analyze the *interstitial areas* of the globe, defined as places of multi-membership, based on the knowledge and perception of the respondents, the limits of the regions can thus fluctuate and the synthetic maps produced are called a “fuzzy geographical space.”

Chapter 2. Postmodernity and spatial and territorial hybridization processes

The chapter on postmodernity is necessary for understanding the spatial and territorial processes associated with this period, called *postmodern*, a period generally characterised by globalization, mixed forms, abandoning patterns, disorientation, transience. Despite their apparent distance from the subject, these issues need to be presented as, in one way or another, they are also reflected in the Romanian urban system. Although theoretical, these concepts refer to phenomena that are created by the society in motion. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze these terms with philosophical nuances that attempt to describe postmodernity in order to subsequently establish correlations with territorial and spatial phenomena. As regards the Romanian territory, postmodernity may be associated with post-socialist life.

One way to understand these processes can be provided by philosophy: “Wittgenstein argues that *to think, to philosophize* is not what everyone thinks – that is, to produce theories – but to find images – that is, *analogies*. Analogies are metaphors in images that, once found, *express thought*.”¹¹

Postmodernity, a term widely used but not defined precisely, is an aspect of the era in which society develops its current existence. The spelling of the term also remains undefined so far and each variant may give rise to interpretations: postmodernism, post-modernism, Postmodernism, post-Modernism. Sciences are outrun by the age in which they develop; at first, sciences helped to advance the world by their slow dynamics and fundamental discoveries, but now all these develop with a rapidity that leaves no room for reflection.

Postmodern as defined by P. Merlin and F. Choay¹², is “a

¹¹ Șerban, Al. L. (2010) – *La ce e bună filosofia?* Atelier LiterNet, secțiunea *Eseu*.

¹² Merlin, P., Choay, F. (dir.) (2005) – *Dictionnaire de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement*, nouvelle édition mise à jour, Quadrige-Presses

term used in the United States by sociologists and critics in relation to that of *post-industrial*, within a reflection on advanced industrial societies, in the electronic age. The content of this concept is very diverse, according to the ideologies of the authors who use it. French philosopher F. Lyotard used it to describe and define a state emerging knowledge in advanced societies towards the end of the 1950s. The notion of *postmodern* is for Lyotard the instrument for a historical and epistemological analysis, and his working hypothesis is: “knowledge changes its status at the same time with societies that enter an era called *post-industrial*” (*La condition postmoderne*, Paris, 1977).

Introduced by the critic Ch. Jenks (*The language of post-modern architecture*, London, 1977), this term came into architectural terminology to describe a movement that is given a double connotation: the modern adjective refers both to the historical “modernity” of the society and the movement called “modern” which in architecture and urbanism, debuted in 1920. On the one hand, postmodern refers to the original epistemological sense, reflecting the predilection for philosophy and human sciences which, for twenty years, won the architectural world: its use betrays the shallowness of these approaches, as well as the current success of the term “deconstruction”, borrowed from J. Derrida and emptied of its original meaning. On the other hand, postmodern globally describes the ideological and formal reactions of a group of architects against the modern movement, under many pretexts: evolution towards a new academicism, failure of the social project, semantic failure and “the boredom” caused by the ethics and aesthetics of functionality, the absence of references to traditional and anti-historicism.

“The postmodern wave forming in the mid 1980s is amplified in the early 1990s to experience a relative obsolescence after these years. Postmodernism does is not unanimously received among geographers, but its importance resides in the fact that supporters from other currents relate to it, opposing or accepting it. The postmodernist approach is at the heart of the discipline through its

reflexive component, which problematizes on the nature, methods, and objectives of geography and social sciences in general. Postmodernism is therefore not a simple geographical approach, it is a reflection on the discipline itself. (...) The characteristics of postmodern society are multiple and the authors disagree on what defines it. The most commonly evoked mutation are the dismantling the Soviet bloc, the emergence of a new economy (part of which is dematerialized and based on information manipulation), the increase in the share of multiculturalism and crossbreeding, globalization, emergence of a new type of urban space, the fragmentation of a society increasingly more dual, the growing role of new information technologies and telecommunications, the triumph of the image and simulacrum, etc. Postmodernity is therefore a state of affairs which, in order to be studied, does not require a specific method. We can use, as did D. Harvey, the Marxist theory to show that postmodernity is the fruit of Pos-Fordist production structures, while modernity was linked to Fordism (Harvey, 1988).”¹³

Postmodernism is an attempt to define reality and meaning, more than establishing a thought paradigm, as it is the intellectual component of *postmodernity* (of the current tech civilization); it is not a philosophy or an epistemology of today’s world; postmodernism covers the general difficulty in the construction of contemporary sciences: for the first time in history, things go faster than words. Most sciences (natural or humanities) must learn to co-exist with their own changing subject and investigate stages already outdated: “The modern space was as fragmented as the postmodern, then because too-little and now because too-much information”.¹⁴

David Lyon (1998) considers that the period 1789-1989 represents two symbolic centuries of *modernity*, whose political expression was seeking a streamlined world. Postmodernism is seen

¹³ Staszak, J.-F. (2001) – *Les enjeux de la géographie anglo-saxonne*, in Staszak, J.-F. et all. (dir.) *Géographies anglo-saxonnes. Tendances contemporaines*, Paris, Belin, p.7-21

¹⁴ Groza, O. (2003) – *Despre geografie și spațiu*, în *Lost in Space*, p. 211

as a crisis in the sense of catastrophe or opportunity. The author distinguishes between *postmodernism* (a cultural current) and postmodernity (a social current).

Modernity is focused on three main principles:

- the idea of absolute limit (space can be clearly defined and managed; here is also formed the concept of territory, within the meaning administrative reality and state support;
- the secularization of the world (in its relation to the outside world, man needs no intermediaries, thus becoming the centre of the world);
- the idea of novelty (which implies a break with past structures and progress towards other structures).

Postmodernity, in contrast, also has three principles:

- the limits cease to be absolute boundaries separating overlapping spatial entities; their content is not well defined anymore, that which before was a limit (border) is now defined as an interface that ensures the contact between different environments, resulting in hybrid structures, difficult to define (cross-border, rurban regions);
- the secularization of the world is becoming less obvious because computerization allows the individual to be present anywhere, instantly, so that man can not be the centre of the world, nor can he identify himself with a certain place; being in the world flow of information, the individual is increasingly deterritorialized;
- the innovative no longer seen as a time constraint because everything that happens comes simultaneously from the past and the future; the lack of depth of the future determines returns to a selective past.¹⁵

¹⁵ Groza, O. (2001b) – *Centralité, identité et différenciation dans le système des villes roumaines*, p. 40-59 în *Analele Științifice ale*

In addition to the concepts of *modern / postmodern*, in the socio-economic system two other notions, *Fordism and post-Fordism*, are used. As regards the Romanian cities, the question is whether one can speak of Fordist / post-Fordist urban system, the characteristics of these two aspects are detailed in Table 1.

*Table 1: The transition from Fordism to post-Fordism*¹⁶

	FORDISM	POST-FORDISM
Production	Mass production	“Specialized” and flexible production (concentrated flows)
Consumption	Mass consumption (regular rising wages)	Differentiated (small series) and distinctive consumption
Production facilities	Determined by the raw materials and transport hubs (suburbs of industrial cities)	Determined by resources in expertise (information, knowledge); Metropolises or networks of small towns (industrial districts), or technopols; Symbolic valorisation and declaring of urban spaces as heritage; Globalization of the models
Living spaces and forms of urbanization	Massive urbanization; Peri-urbanization (<i>suburbs</i>); Individual houses or	Spaces with multiple forms, but the foundation of gentrification processes in urban centers and peri-centers;

Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, serie nouă, tomul XLVII, s. II. c. Geografie

¹⁶ Bidou-Zachariasen, C., (2006) în Berque et all. (coord.), p.103

	larger ensembles for consumption (cars, equipment items); State welfare (housing aids); Decline in city-centers.	Re-qualification of the centers (mixed or private funding); “Residential enclaves”; Globalization of the models.
Family forms	Traditional nuclear family and low active female population	Variety of family forms (increasing the active female population, single mono-parental families, celibacy, etc.)
Productive and social actors	Low skilled labour force (profit obtained through the labour force); Organized working class;	Skilled labour force (profit obtained through Thought Force – “innovation”); Domination “service class”; Globalization “service class”; Eclatement of the collectives (cultures of classes, trade unions) and “the invizibilisation” of the popular classes.
State	More present	More absent

The sub-chapter on utopia aims to present definitions of utopia and its association with the communist ideology, which can be seen as utopia, but in a negative sense: the people was not considered as consisting of rational human beings, but of instruments meant to ensure the strength and wellbeing of the leaders and fulfil the grandiose plans of the communist system. The communist utopia in Romania was taken to extremes both by the authorities and the general

public, blackmailed (or not) to participate in “building new man”.

Below are the socio-economic and political processes that shape the current geographic space and the social space:

Mondialization – expresses the borderless planetary stage of development where everything is accessible, near, in which all the elements communicate and where, therefore, solidarity and interdependencies increase. This new state of the world began to emerge in the '70s and '80s. Mondialization is a completion of internationalization (which affects only a part of the states and activities), distinguished by *globalization*, the latter also eliminating the time factor (due to innovations in information technology), in addition to spatial obstacles. The main modern form of territorial classification that is under discussion is the state. Creation of the Western Europe, the modern state tends to become, gradually, an obsolete form of organization. In postmodernity, the state had to adapt, delegating part of its traditional tasks to the lower levels administrative organization (regional, local) and liberalizing their international responsibilities through advanced integration within higher forms (economic and/or political and military unions).

Globalization – the term has two meanings: it can be the French translation of the word, which in English means mondialization; it may be the French term which corresponds to the second stage of globalization, namely the creation of global production and information networks. Globalization includes the geographic scope plus interconnections, opening of the markets, a global correlation of information with communication circuits, with management processes and production networks. This process is the result of two developments: that of new technologies and of the market; technologies have opened the interactions between different elements of society, from agriculture to financial circuits, and the market becomes the universal reference and means of comparison, using common values and thus becoming the organizer of inter-relations. Changes affecting culture which turned into capital consumer, sport developed into performance industry are characteristics of these changes.

Glocalization – refers to the increasing articulation of local territories to world economy, stressing the permanence of spatial classification of economic phenomena. In other words, glocalization means aligning to the standards imposed by mondialization but taking into account the specific and the local resources, resulting in a self-limited globalization, personalized by local actors. If in economical language glocalization means adjusting the supply to the local clients (initiative starts from businesses), in terms of spatial planning, it seems that initiative to adapt globalization does not start from “bidder”, but from the local “clientele”.

Internationalization – “internationalization was confused with access to mondialization, while it is actually only a preliminary stage” (Guy Carron from Carrière). This process is defined by an opening to the outside, like mondialization, but is distinguished by the fact that its expansion is limited to a part of the world, to certain aspects of human activities, national criteria are predominant.

Metropolitanisation – this term designates a spatial dynamic that organizes the territory around a metropolis (the most important city from a given territory). The peri-urban area expands, the main settlements connecting with each other, with their ways of life. Metropolitanisation, through specific processes of integration and connection, does not take into account the classification into rural / urban. The metropolis concentrates control activities and higher tertiary functions, making it attractive for the population and causing high densities of people and activities. Metropolitanisation leads to a redefinition of space in the urban environment: space-consuming functions are transferred to the suburbs, and in the centre are implanted with high value-added activities.

Self-centering – Ferguene, A., Hsaini, A., (1998) did not explicitly use the notion of *self-centering* or *self-centered development*, but that of *endogenous development*, which means the same thing. The major components of endogenous development are: the critique of regional economy, territorial development, reference to basic needs, community development, best use of local resources,

integrated development, selective autarky, small-scale, informal economy, local innovations.

Rurbanisation – This is a consequence of the desire to “return to the origins” as well as an increase in the standard of living (owning a car, improvement of transportation and communication means). This phenomenon usually occurs near urban agglomerations with dense population. Rural areas that are “rurbanized” are those that have access to major transportation networks (motorways).

Gentrification – in macro-sociological sense, gentrification means a return to the city, a shift in the traditional model of movement towards the periphery. In micro-sociological sense, S en ecal (1990) defines gentrification as the progressive emergence of a new middle class in the old neighbourhoods located close to the centre of the city. This class emerged from the “baby-boom” generation, is educated, has a low birth rate and is attached to the economic values of these neighbourhoods. First, there is a middle class, who buy houses and renovate them on their own without mortgages. Rent price increases (due to renovations), and the low-income class is forced to leave the area. Then comes a gradual reconquest of the district by the businessmen, real estate speculators, prices rise and in the end the district has a high standard of living.

The results of the hybridization / spatial and territorial recomposition phenomena are the spaces “between”. *Between* is a relative term that can synthesize most controversial terms (and more different from a socio-cultural area to another) of *intermediate*, *interstitial*, *entre-deux*, *Zwischenstadt*, *Zwischenraum*. This term is used so as not to sharpen the differences between the meanings of terms listed.

Marginal regions - there is no definition of marginal regions. Walter Leimgruber (2001) offers the theoretical bases, clarifying the links established between mondialization, disadjustment and marginalization, but he does not specify what is meant by *marginal region*; quoting Andreoli (1992) it is only stated only that it is poor, marginality referring which is located at “the margin” of a system, taking into account its socio-economic characteristics,

marginal regions receive fewer benefits than other regions, their development being “very weak.” Regional disparities and inequalities form marginality. Next, Lawrence M. Sommers *et al.* (2001) defined marginality as a “state of poverty and deprivation caused by uneven development”. W. Leimgruber then adds that the notion of *reference scale* is central to the study of marginality, and this must be addressed in space and time, as marginality is dynamic. Marginality is a spatial phenomenon (a relationship between two different entities), which evolves according to a context (economic, social, cultural, political) and whose consequences can be seen on the same planes. Marginality is therefore dynamic, constantly changing depending on the evolution and relationships it creates. It is not a finished product, because the system is constantly changing; we can say that a system is open, like a cell. “Open systems are basically closed on the organizational plan, but open on the material and energetic plan, because the flow of matter and energy that comes from the environment is what allows them to survive” (Capra, 2001 in Dery, S. (dir.), 2005). This activates the system and, depending on the destination of the flow of energy / information, marginality / centrality vary. This energy / information contribute to reducing / increasing the importance of distance.

Entre-deux, Espaces intermediaries - the term *entre-deux* was used by Violette Rey (1992), to define the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which freed themselves from the communist regime in the '90s. Is a term used to homogenize, at least in terms of nomenclature, a heterogeneous region, because the question is whether it can encompass this ensemble under one name or should we distinguish between a Central Europe from a Balkan Europe, thus designating the adhesion and exclusion zones. The problem that persists in Central-Eastern Europe is “the non-emergence” of a territorial nucleus, in the middle Danube basin, comparable to the Western core and the Russian one. Therefore, this part of Europe can be considered a space “entre-deux” (*between*). “*The intermediate space* is a very popular idea in the social sciences: that of the progressive abandonment of theories that preach the convergence of societal trajectories, the unique model of modernity

and the unitary, linear and universal historical time. The content of concept is evolving and relative to spatial and temporal scales of analysis; the scientist's effort would be to detect the specificity of the local trajectories, but seen in their relations with globalizing dynamics. Intermediarity has a hybrid aspect, because of some dense and complex overlappings of rural and urban, agricultural and industrial" (Hélène Roth-Sallard, 2006). *D'entre deux* regions are those regions where local structures are shaped rather by external forces than by the domestic, areas where the development of external spaces requires the work of Sisyphus, eternally at the beginning, resulting in failure to complete ongoing processes, spaces where the instability of the dynamics is partially mitigated by the inventions of everyday life.¹⁷

Shrinking regions - This phrase (*shrinking regions*) has demographic connotations and is used in the European Parliament and the ESPON to define regions facing depopulation (aging population and low birth rate). The concept is recent (early 2000) even if it corresponds to earlier realities. The novelty it brings, however, is the generalization of depopulation at regional scale, including cities (*Shrinking Cities*). The definition of the concept is still subject to debate; even if the phenomenon of population decline is associated with other phenomena, such as aging, it is preferable to adopt the simplest definition: decline in the number of inhabitants of a region in a single generation.

Interstitial Spaces – According to *Dictionarul Explicativ al Limbii Române*, [The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language], *interstitial space* is “an empty space, located between parts of a body or between different bodies.” Interstitial cities are those cities that are not found on major alignments that structure space, but between them, in the empty spaces, marginalized and seemingly unimportant in the territory, though by nature they have an

¹⁷ Groza, O., Camară, G. (2009) – *L'étrange urbanité des villes intermédiaires en Roumanie*, comunicare la colocviul *Penser les espaces intermédiaires en Europe*, ENS Lyon

important share. G. Țurcănașu (2006), mentions the term *interstitial space*, defined as “the periphery of a systemic organization, which can avoid the influences of the neighbouring urban pole, where other centers of territorial control emerge. They are also under the influence, more or less diffuse, of certain centers of polarization. Therefore, in diachronic analyses of a settlement system, the fluctuation of the limits of spatial polarization centers turns into an almost trivial phenomenon and the limits are becoming increasingly clear when they overlap some rigorously defined political limeses.”¹⁸ P. Serfaty-Garzon (*La ville et ses restes*, 1991), with a suggestive chapter (*Ugliness and Legitimacy of the Urban Landscape*), brings into focus “the broken spaces we see from the car at speed, these differences in the urban texture that our eyes see them but not set, the solitary expanses dotted with abandoned buildings (...) Our focus will be directed to one of the most neglected dimensions of the modern urban landscape, one that pertains to the common, the indifferent, the ugly.” These areas (areas under bridges, former industrial buildings, empty lots) are seen as some vague, empty lands, with a negative connotation, inhabited by people according to location. Small towns in interstitial spaces (in two regions of France and Spain) are analyzed in the PhD thesis developed by M.-E. Fererol (2010), at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, the interstitial spaces also being the subject of CERAMAC, from the same university. Small towns are considered to be the most vulnerable because of insufficient local resources (especially human capital) and large cities usually do not appear in interstitial spaces exactly because they generate polarized areas.

Zwischenstadt - Th. Sieverts proposed the concept of *Zwischenstadt* “between cities”: vast territories of undefined forms, products of economic, social and cultural logics that induce difficulties in redefining European city. The author maintains the necessary adaptation of urban practices to the occurrence this phenomenon. He criticizes the concepts of urbanity, centrality,

¹⁸ G. Țurcănașu (2006) – *Evoluția și starea actuală a sistemului de așezări din Moldova*, Iași, casa Editorială Demiurg, p.19.

density, mixedness and ecology, which sometimes do not mirror the reality. “Urban peripheries, set between village and town, at the intersection of local and global communication networks, characterize contemporary urbanization; the issue raised by the new cities is that they are not included in proximity dynamics. An urban development without city, this corresponds to the term *Zwischenstadt*. The inability of traditional city to reconcile their inclusion at various levels of networks appears to Sieverts as proof of failure in traditional planning methods.” (M. Payette, Hamelin, 2005).

The practical stakes of the existence of *the spaces in-between* are, first, territorial underdevelopment through syncopation and lack of cohesion, depopulation (*shrinking regions*). Postmodernity, with its new “laws”, determines a particular social behaviour based on consumption, innovation, social loneliness and globalization. In response to the forms of actions of mondialization (the main “enemy” of the previous lifestyle, based on tradition, concentration of socio-economic life between national boundaries, state control), society fights back, seeking forms to adapt to the new challenges.

Chapter 3. Romanian urban network – between communist heritage and present difficulties

As a result of its geographical position “between East and West” (N. Djuvara, 2007) and as a former socialist state, Romania had a particular evolution since 1990 – the situation is even more complicated for the countries that belonged to the former Yugoslavia, who are “more *between*” than Romania, because they are located in the same geographical area but they have many ethno-religious problems caused exactly by the equal influences of the East and the West. An analysis of the European region where our country is located was performed by V. Rey (1996)¹⁹: “Between Western Europe and the Europe of the Eastern Slavic territories marked by Russian civilization, *another* Europe lies from the Polish coast of the Baltic Sea to Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic Sea and to the Romanian and Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea. *Another Europe*, very close, but little known and difficult to named, a provisional Europe in its outline and about to readjust itself within the texture of the world. Social experiences and territorial organizations are extremely dense and rich, often associated with adversity.”

The concept of *city* is defined differently, depending on the area of interest of the researchers. M. Istrate (2008) conducted a review of definitions:

1. For historians, the nature of the city is political, it is its essential function. “Throughout history, the city is not characterized either by number or by the activities of its inhabitants, but by the particular features of legal status, sociability and culture. (...) The city is distinguished from its surrounding environment in that, in the landscape, it is the rooting point of power”

19 Rey, V. (1996) – *Les Europes Orientales*, p. 8-45 in „*Géographie Universelle*”, vol. 10, Brunet, R. et Rey, V. – *Europes Orientales, Russie, Asie Centrale*, Paris, Belin-Reclus.

(G. Duby, preface to *Histoire de la France urbaine*, 1980).

2. For geographers, “the regional city does not depend on the number of inhabitants, neither on that of the officials, nor even on any form of work. It fulfils the role of a guide – a higher element it inserts into various forms of activity. The city irrigates the area through its capital. (...) It serves as an intermediary between the area it highlights and the markets outside it.” (P. Vidal de la Blache, 1910).
3. For economists, the city is represented as a market, source of agglomeration effects, as the centre of creation and redistribution of economic values and innovations, a centre for distributing / collecting income and innovations (J. Rémy, 1966; Ph. Aydalot, 1985).
4. For sociologists, “the city is territory and population, material framework and unit of collective life, configuration of physical objects and relationship node between social subjects. Its most significant features result from this: the meeting, the mosaic, the centrality, the political and institutional function, a condition characteristic to the townsman’s way of life” (Y. Grafmeyr, 1994).

Another definition is based on the functionality of the city, “because it is the most general characteristic, passing over many individual, regional and national aspects, which are less characteristic, and can be applied across the Globe” (Al. Ungureanu, G. Țurcănașu, 2008).

“The city is a place and an environment, whose main characteristic is the interaction between agents (P. Claval, 1986, in R. Le Goix, 2005). The city is a geographical object that requires many levels of understanding: centrality, concentration, hierarchy, boundaries, networks. (...) The morphology is an essential criterion to define a city and morphological agglomeration corresponds to the

built continuum, which is mainly evaluated according to population density. (...) Cities, taken as a whole, play a major role in structuring and organizing the geographic space: they polarize the economic activity, the flows, according to a hierarchy of centrality, they maintain and strengthen the bonds of interdependence in a given territory at all levels (region, state, world). The expression urban network translates into a powerful image these links, and these relationships are materialized in transportation routes, flows, exchanges, tangible (people, goods) or intangible (telecommunications, capital). Another expression that is used is urban armature, less ambiguous because it is not confused with the city's technical networks (water supply, cables) which are the subject of urban planners.”²⁰

The Romanian urban system is relatively new, outlined by several “waves” of urbanization, many of the urban settlements holding the current status since the communist period and then after 1990 and 2000. The criteria for establishing cities and towns are objective, but choosing the localities is often subjective, and there are “rural cities” and “urban villages”. In 2007, the Romanian urban network counted 320 cities and towns. The Census of 2011 collected the latest available data used in this paper. In general, there is a decreasing tendency in the number of inhabitants, but with some exceptions. Data presented are preliminary, provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies in august 2012. Many doubts surround the accuracy of the data collected during the Census of October 2011, suspicions caused by data collection methodology (among other problems, it is not yet known whether the total population of the urban settlements also refers to the subordinate localities or only to the population of the urban settlement itself) and the interference of political factors and electoral interests. In this case, we can ask what type of data is false: data from 2002 or 2011. This

²⁰ Le Goix, R. (2005) – *Villes et mondialisation: le défi majeur du XXIe siècle*, Paris, Ellipses, p.32.

because, in some cases, the differences are striking and the dramatic decrease in the number of inhabitants should be reflected, for example, in the falling prices in the housing market (many homes should not have residents). There are 19 urban settlements in Romania that show a decrease in the number of inhabitants of more than 30% of which 9 are in historical (Western) region of Moldova. Citing several examples might clarify for us the decline in population, the most affected being Neamț, Vaslui, Bacău, Botoșani, Suceava counties (the first two counties are marked by significant decreases, including in towns and county capital cities): the municipality of Piatra Neamț (from 113,546 inhabitants in 2002 to 77,393 inhabitants in 2011), the municipality of Roman (from 74,028 inhabitants in 2002 to 47,304 inhabitants in 2011), the municipality of Bârlad (from 73,068 inhabitants in 2002 to 49,929 inhabitants in 2011), the municipality of Vaslui (from 73,709 inhabitants in 2002 to 50,935 inhabitants in 2011), the municipality of Dorohoi and, from another region of the country, the municipality of Făgăraș, to mention the large settlements, other towns are small urban settlements. Positively, a slight increase in population is recorded in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca and a strong growth, of over 80% (Bragadiru) occurs in cities around the capital, most likely due to the proliferation of the new residential neighbourhoods. Figure 1 graphically illustrates the evolution / involution of the number of inhabitants in urban settlements of Romania, in the last two censuses (2002 and 2011).

The members of the CUGUAT-TIGRIS Centre conducted a comprehensive analysis of the geographical components of the Romanian territory within *Atlasului teritorial al României [The Territorial Atlas of Romania]* (on-line), the work quoting the analysis on the urban environment (identifying major stages in the creation of the Romanian urban network, the diagnosis of the urban system and solutions on how to eliminate the mono-centric character, that is, the imposition of regional centers – forming a polycentric urban network).

**EVOLUȚIA NUMERICĂ A POPULAȚIEI AȘEZĂRILOR URBANE ALE ROMÂNIEI (2002-2011) /
L'EVOLUTION DU NOMBRE DE LA POPULATION DES ETABLISSEMENTS URBAINS DE ROUMANIE (2002-2011)**

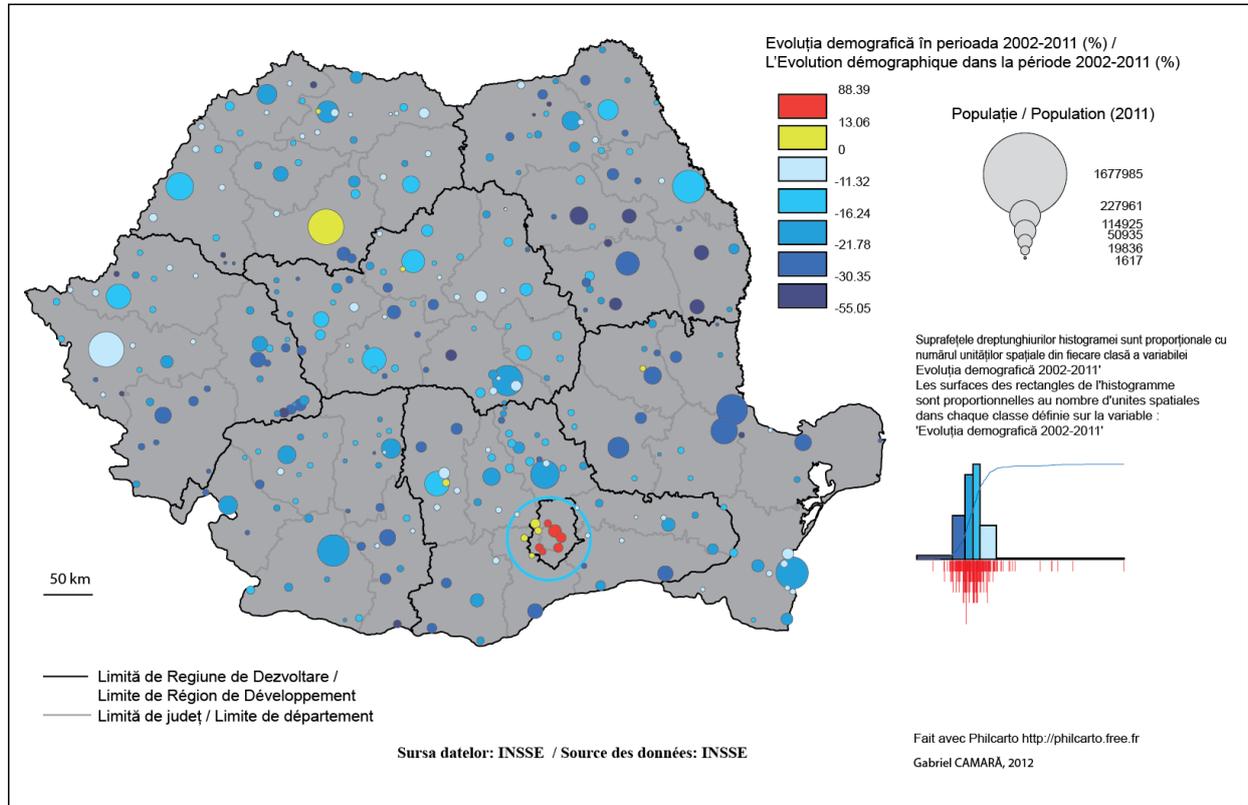


Fig. 1 Numerical evolution of the urban settlements population from Romania (2002-2011)

Chapter 4. The interstitial cities of Romania

The name “interstitial spaces” has a negative connotation, stronger than that of “intermediate spaces” as “intermediary” means being located at a certain stage, which may involve a further development. “Interstitial” can be synonymous with localization in an empty space, without perspective, in a “territorial gap”. The theoretical model developed by Huff was used to establish the interstitial cities, and an overview of the Reilly and Huff theoretical models was performed Cl. Grasland (2001). Applying the polarization model developed by Huff at three levels – national, regional, local (Figures 10, 11, 12 in the paper), resulted in a synthetic representation of interstitial areas (Figure 13 in the paper, Figure 2 in the following pages), resulting from the interference of all the levels of polarization (national, regional, local). Some of these cities (Vatra Dornei, Broșteni, Gheorgheni, Nehoiu, Pătârlgele, Făurei, Însurăței, Țândărei, Hârșova, Băneasa, Câmpulung, Drăgănești-Olt, Corabia, Orșova) are also found in the last class determined by the fulfilment of the NSP indicators (Figures 30 and 31 in the paper) as well as in the last class on the gap between the demographic rank and the rank calculated based on NSP criteria. In the figure below, there were established the interstitial cities, according to the three models presented in the previous figures; there can be considered as interstitial the urban settlements found in interstitial spaces between the polarized areas, in all three cases, regardless of scale analysis. This consideration is based on the fact that an urban settlement can not be considered interstitial only in one case but, for verification, if it is found in all three cases, at least theoretically, in an interstitial area. Thus, the town of Sibiu appears to be interstitial, due to its location in a national interstitial area, cut by the polarized areas of the regional metropolises Cluj-Napoca, Brasov, Timisoara, Craiova. In reality, however, this municipality can not be considered interstitial, as it is an important cultural, tourist, economic, and administrative centre. At the following levels of analysis, Sibiu no longer falls into the category of interstitial area, as it generates polarized are, as regional city and county capital

city. On the other hand, if we take into account the local geomorphological configuration, we can regard as interstitial cities those settlements that are not theoretically interstitial, except at local level: the town Borșa is located, theoretically, in the area polarized by Cluj-Napoca, but geographical setting of the city reveals its isolation – set in Eastern part of Maramureș County, at the foot of Rodna Mountains, in a French “cul-de-sac” (*dead end*), although national roads DN18 (Moldova-Maramures) and DN17 (Maramureș-Transylvania) can provide good accessibility. The same situation occurs in the south-western towns of Suceava County (Vatra Dornei and Broșteni), in Harghita County (municipalities of Gheorgheni and Odorhei Secuiesc), north-western and south of Alba County (Câmpeni, Baia de Arieș, Abrud, Cugir), in Mehedinți County (Orșova), in Argeș County (Câmpulung), in Dâmbovița County (Fieni), in Prahova County (Câmpina, Breaza, Slănic), in the north-western and south-western regions of Buzău County (in the mountain area Nehoiu and Pătârlagele, and in the Romanian Plain, the town Pogoanele), in the counties in the Romanian Plain: Olt (Corabia, Drăgănești-Olt), Teleorman (Roșiori de Vede, Turnu Măgurele), Ialomița (Căzănești, Țândărei, Fierbinți-Târg), Brăila (Ianca, Făurei, Însurăței), Constanța (Hârșova, Băneasa); Tulcea (Sulina).

**ARIILE INTERSTIȚIALE DIN ROMÂNIA, DETERMINATE DUPĂ MODELUL TEORETIC ELABORAT DE HUFF /
 ILES AIRES INTERSTITIELLES DE ROUMANIE DETERMINEES PAR LE MODELE THEORIQUE ELABORE PAR HUFF**

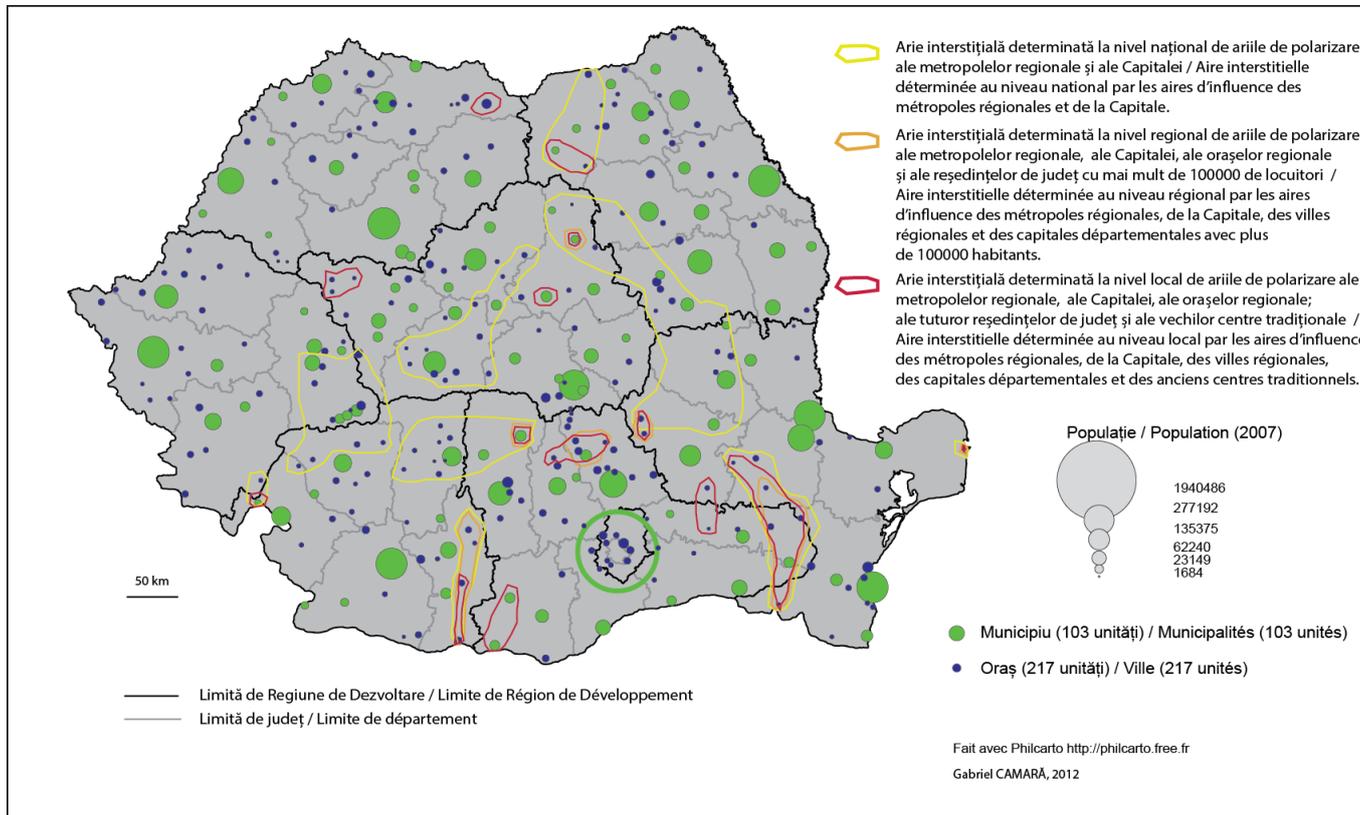


Fig. 2 Interstitial areas from Romania (theoretical model).

Law no. 100 of 19 April 2007 *amending and supplementing Law no. 351/2001 on approving the National Spatial Plan – Section IV – Settlements Network*, published in Official Gazette no. 284 of 27 April 2007, has a number of provisions in the Section *Main Minimal Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators Defining Urban Settlements*, on the criteria to be met by cities and towns in order to hold this administrative status. In many cases these provisions are not complied with and the cartograms developed will prove this, based on data from censuses and other databases (INSSE, Ministries, Prefectures, Town Halls). The analysis performed by I. Muntele (2009) on the criteria for declaring Romanian urban settlements is comprehensive, by taking into account all criteria (owned services) and not just those imposed by NSP, analysis extended to the entire network of settlements in Romania (urban and rural), the author identifies a list of potential candidate settlements for the transition from rural to urban, in the near future.

The present paper adopted this method, of analyzing the urban indicators listed in the NSP-IV, to see if cities located in interstitial areas are interstitial themselves, through non-compliance with urban planning rules and, therefore, can not be considered urban settlements only from the point of view of the political decision. Each indicator was mapped (Figures 15-29 in the paper), and for each criterion there were highlighted four cases: municipalities that meet / do not meet the criterion and cities that meet / do not meet the criterion. Subsequently, there were later calculated the ranks that an urban area holds for each criterion, and finally the sum of the ranks was calculated and distributed in classes, using the arithmetic and quadratic progressions.

One way to achieve a typology of Romanian urban settlements is the sum of the ranks. Rank sum method means to provide ranks to each administrative unit under consideration, according to the descending order determined by the indicators examined. Thus, the unit with the best score get rank 1, the following locations in the ranking are numbered with increasing ranks, the highest rank is assigned to the unit with the minimum quality level. Rank sum method has the advantage of easy implementation, providing relatively relevant information related to the level of compliance by the administrative-territorial units with the various parameters imposed by territorial development.

In this case, the sum of ranks was applied for the following indicators included in the NSP – Section IV, for declare certain settlements as municipalities or towns:

- I – number of inhabitants;
- II – the proportion of the population engaged in agricultural activities;
- III – the proportion of the dwellings with water supply facilities;
- VI – number of hospital beds per 1000 inhabitants and VII – the number of doctors per 1000 inhabitants were replaced, due to lack of data, with the existence of hospital-type health units and their quality.
- X – number of bed places in hotels;
- XI – share of modernized streets;
- XII – share of streets with water distribution networks;
- XIII – share of streets with sewage pipes;
- XVI – green spaces (parks, public gardens, squares), expressed in m²/inhabitant.

The indicators that were not considered are those listed below, because of the lack of statistical data, or in correlation with previously analyzed indicators (plumbing in homes depends on water supply), or taking into account the ubiquity of certain services hence their lack of relevance in the present study (educational institutions):

- IV – furnishing the houses with plumbing installations;
- V – furnishing the houses with central heating installations;
- VIII – existence of educational institutions and IX – cultural and sports facilities;
- XIV – wastewater treatment.
- XV – length of streets provided with external networks for fire hydrants;
- XVII – existence of controlled landfills with secured access.

Following the calculations, the resulting data were divided into classes (1-5, 1 – the highest degree of fulfilling the criteria), the latter being obtained using the arithmetic progression and quadratic progression methods.

For *arithmetic progression* (Figure 30 in the paper) class amplitudes are constant and are obtained as follows:

$$a = \frac{M - m}{k}$$

a is the amplitude and *rate of progression*,

M is the maximum and

m is the minimum value of the string

k is the number of classes

Limits obtained are respectively $m, m+a, m+2a, \dots, m+ka=M$.

The disadvantage of this method lies in the exaggerated detailing of the area of the extreme values in the string.

Quadratic progression (Figure 31 in the paper) eliminates the disadvantages of the previous method. Successive limits are obtained by squaring the terms of an arithmetic progression, where the ratio is calculated according to the formula:

TIPOLOGIA AȘEZĂRILOR URBANE ALE ROMÂNIEI /
LA TYPOLOGIE DES ÉTABLISSEMENTS URBAINS DE ROUMANIE

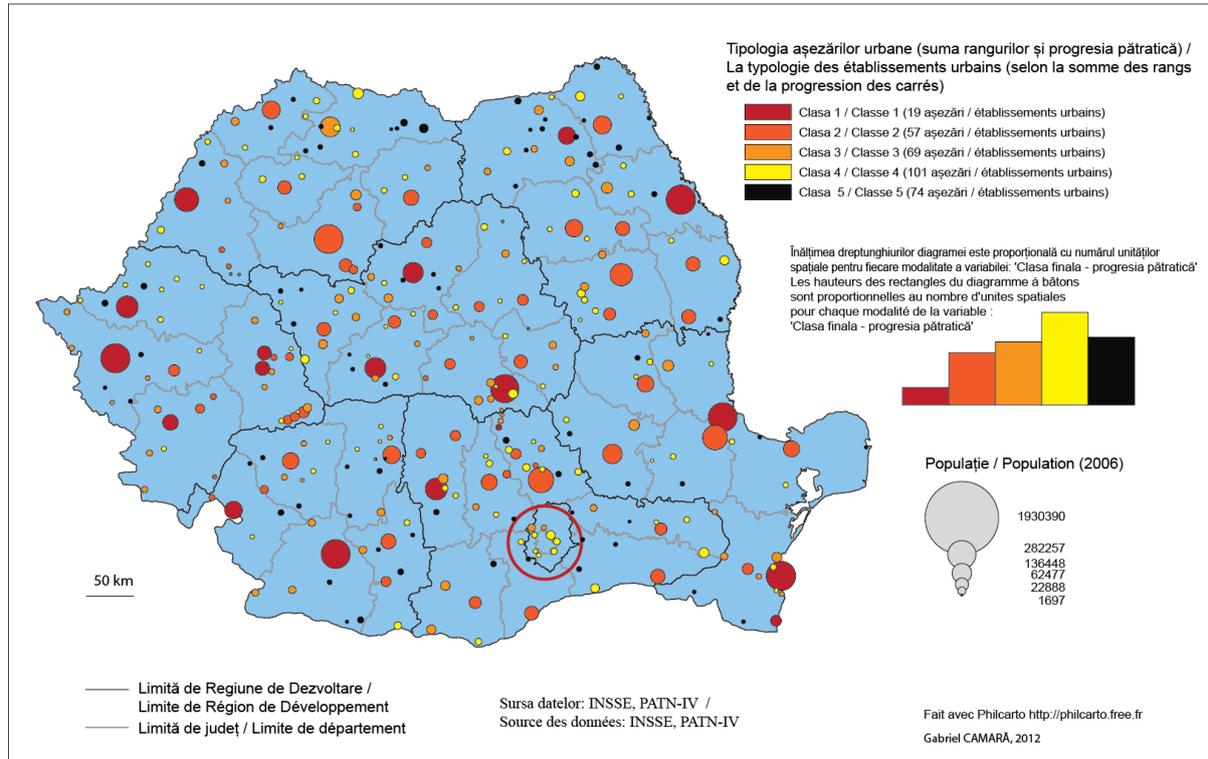


Fig. 3 Romanian urban settlements typology as NSP criteria (rank sum methods, quadratic progression)

$$P = \frac{\sqrt{M} - \sqrt{m}}{k}$$

Limits shall be calculated as follows:

$$m, (\sqrt{m} + P)^2, (\sqrt{m} + 2P)^2, \dots, (\sqrt{m} + kP)^2.$$

The differences between the two methods only show that the least urbanized towns that fail to meet the basic criteria of spatial and urban planning are also included in the last class (5): 74 towns found in the last class, calculated based on quadratic progression, and 44 towns for the class calculated based on arithmetic progression. Therefore, 44 is the number of towns that are found in the last class, regardless of the method of calculation (Table 6 in the paper – Table 2 below – contains the list of towns called interstitial – based on (non)compliance with the NSP criteria).

The issue raised in this analysis is the heterogeneity of data, which also come from different years; another problem is the lack of statistical data to be able to apply the analysis to all indicators provided by NSP. Even in these circumstances, we believe the result is relevant and introducing the indicators that were not included in this analysis will not radically change the results – this is because, as mentioned earlier, some services are ubiquitous (education) and are implemented based on others, already analyzed (connecting the houses to the water supply networks also implies connecting that to the sewerage networks).

Assuming that demographic rank 1 implicitly implies rank 1 as regards “the urban quality” of an urban settlement, the same hypothesis is applied to the entire Romanian urban system, up to rank 320, a cartogram was drawn-up (Figure 32 of the paper, Figure 4 below) of the difference between those two ranks, being able to conclude that interstitial cities are those that present very large gaps between the two ranks (last class, with the largest differences, between 101 and 180).

Table 2: Interstitial cities of Romania, from NSP criteria point of view (class 5 – lowest degree of fulfillment).

Data source: INSSE.

City	Department	Year of declaration of city status	Population 2006	Final rank
Murgeni	Vaslui	2003	7832	277
Isaccea	Tulcea		5294	278
Bălcești	Vâlcea	2002	5771	279
Tălmăciu	Sibiu		7218	280
Broșteni	Suceava	2004	6567	281
Ardud	Satu Mare	2004	6744	282
Ciacova	Timiș	2004	4944	283
Lehliu Gară	Călărași	1989	6359	284
Miercurea Sibiului	Sibiu	2003	4093	285
Tismana	Gorj	2004	7928	286
Bucecea	Botoșani	2004	5265	287
Podu Iloaiei	Iași	2005	10069	288
Băneasa	Constanța	2004	5525	289
Sărmașu	Mureș	2003	7629	290
Gătaia	Timiș	2004	6113	291
Câmpeni	Alba	1960	8083	292
Miercurea Nirajului	Mureș	2003	6271	293
Recaș	Timiș	2004	8218	294
Piatra-Olt	Olt		6055	295
Dolhasca	Suceava	2004	11300	296
Berbești	Vâlcea	2003	5796	297
Pogoanele	Buzău	1989	7777	298

Vicovu de Sus	Suceava	2004	14471	299
Liteni	Suceava	2004	10129	300
Tăuții-Măgherăuș	Maramureș	2004	6966	301
Căzănești	Ialomița	2004	3509	302
Cajvana	Suceava	2004	8254	303
Dăbuleni	Dolj	2004	13504	304
Salcea	Suceava	2004	9584	305
Berești	Galați	1968	3552	306
Fundulea	Călărași	1989	6638	307
Livada	Satu Mare	2006	7006	308
Frasin	Suceava	2004	6630	309
Dragomirești	Maramureș	2004	3196	310
Ștefănești	Botoșani	2004	5807	311
Însurăței	Brăila	1989	7366	312
Răcari	Dâmbovița	2004	6720	313
Flămânzi	Botoșani	2004	12140	314
Bechet	Dolj	2004	3998	315
Potcoava	Olt	2004	6011	316
Budești	Călărași	1989	9334	317
Fierbinți-Târg	Ialomița	2004	4772	318
Milișăuți	Suceava	2004	5395	319
Săliștea de Sus	Maramureș	2004	5210	320

**AȘEZĂRILE URBANE ALE ROMÂNIEI - DECALAJUL RANGURILOR (2006) /
LES ETABLISSEMENTS URBAINS DE ROUMANIE - LE DECALAGE DES RANGS (2006)**

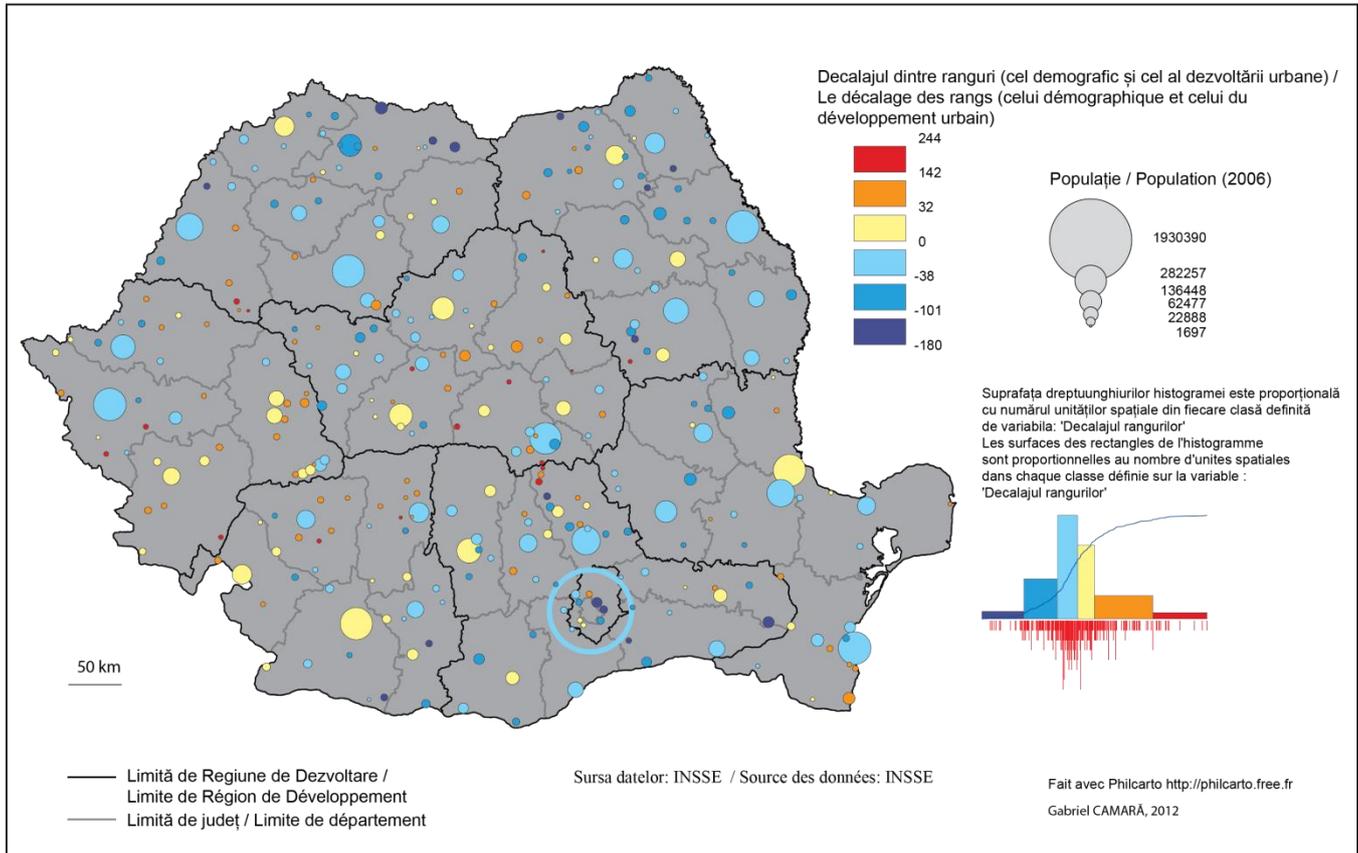


Fig. 4 Urban settlements of Romania and the gap ranking

The following pages also represented other characteristics of urban settlements in Romania, accompanied by cartograms / cartodiagrams: *aging index*, *population density within the city* (cities located in interstitial areas have a low population density within the city, in contrast to big cities, which may indicate a qualitative aspect of living), *divorce rate* (the highest values seem to coincide with the location in (former) industrial cities currently affected by social problems (unemployment, poverty) – Roman, Piatra Neamț, Galați, Călărași, Hunedoara, towns in Petrosani mining basin, etc.) *marriage rate*, *natural balance*, *balance of residence establishments and relocations* (positive values are recorded especially in large university cities), *migratory balance*, *the legal function*, *the financial and banking function*.

As regards the prospects for development within the urban network, we believe that polycentrism is a way to eliminate disparities. Rusu, Al., Țurcănașu, G. (2008) conducted a study on the implementation of polycentrism in Romanian and Bulgarian urban systems: “triggered spontaneously or through political planning, polycentrism would be an alternative to the centrality of capitals which, captive in the metropolitanisation, are unable to coordinate a balanced and cohesive development of the national territories,” in order to reduce high primatiality of the Capital and to favour a synchronized integration of regional capitals and metropolises in the European urban system.

“(3) Through the Territorial Agenda, we want to promote a polycentric territorial development of the EU to better use available resources in European regions. In this way, we will contribute to the construction of a Europe sustainable from a cultural, social, environmental and economical point of view. It is particularly important to better integrate new Member States in this policy of *polycentric development* of human settlements.”²¹

²¹ Agenda teritorială a Uniunii Europene, Leipzig, 2007.

Conclusions

This analysis of the Romanian urban system explored the multiple meanings that *interstitial* may have and its analytical possibilities; the analysis cannot provide a definitive answer, but may be the basis of a novel analytical, in-depth approach.

The work may cause slight confusion about the terminology used (*in-between*, intermediate, interstitial), given the mentioning of these concepts in various contexts. *In-betweenness* is the *sine qua non* condition for an area / town to be later considered *intermediate* or *interstitial*. The differences and “the competencies” of these two terms have been presented above.

The guiding line of the thesis was to determine, in theory, the interstitial spaces (with *interstitial* defined only as spatial location) and the towns that are found in those areas, within the Romanian urban system, using the gravity model developed by Huff, then applying the analysis in practice, by mapping the data for some of the criteria developed by the NSP.

In theory, there were determined interstitial spaces and cities at three levels: *national* – interstitial spaces and cities determined by the polarization areas of regional metropolises; *regional* – interstitial spaces and cities determined by the polarization areas of municipalities over 100,000 inhabitants (county capitals and other municipalities with a population over 100,000 inhabitants); *local* – interstitial spaces and cities determined by the polarization areas of all county capitals and three other urban centers. It should also be noted that the scale of the analysis was detailed by including, in the last two categories, the previous category of polarizing centers.

Interstitial cities are not always those “suspected” to be interstitial (relating directly to the negative connotation of the term), at least in terms of urban planning (Vatra Dornei, which records a constant population decline after 1990, although set in a theoretically interstitial area, is included in class 2 in terms of urban characteristics, that is, a class including urban settlements with a high degree of compliance with urban planning criteria). The declared objectives

were partially achieved in that it was shown, based on data and statistical methods, that small towns are more likely to fail to meet the NSP criteria and, indirectly, to fail to hold functions according to rank in the hierarchy urban. This paper can not be exhaustive because of the complexity of the subject and the several possible analysis methods; the paper provided a critical analysis (partial, depending on existing data for some indicators) of the *National Spatial Plan – Section IV - Settlements Network*.

Finally, how could we formulate nevertheless the answer to the question “which are the interstitial cities in Romania”? Perhaps the answer can not be given easily, despite the attempts presented in this paper. There are several possibilities resulting from the analysis performed:

- Interstitial cities are those found in interstitial spaces determined theoretically at any level (national, regional, local), whose characteristics were then analyzed in the light of the NSP criteria;
- Interstitial cities can be considered only those found simultaneously, for all three scales of analysis (national, regional, local), in interstitial spaces determined theoretically;
- Interstitial cities are those that, by applying the rank sum method and class distribution (using two statistical methods – based on arithmetic progression and based on quadratic progression), can be found in the last class, for both methods used, i.e. the class with urban settlements that meet to the lowest degree the urban planning criteria imposed in NSP;
- Interstitial cities may be those that are in the last class, which contains the larger differences between the rank held in the national urban hierarchy (rank given by population size) and the rank held for NSP compliance;
- Interstitial cities may be those located near large cities, in the shadows, thus acquiring a characteristic of “dormitory town” (provider of commuter labour force) and lacking urban functions, held by the main city in the proximity (urban “prey-

predator” relationship type – Ianoș, 2004).

- Interstitial cities may be those situated not between the polarizing areas of regional metropolises (if we consider that Christaller’s theory is anachronistic, that is, there are no polarizing areas, but direct links between metropolises / cities of the “hubs and spokes” type) but on the direction of “the spokes”, in tunnel-type relations.

Researches on interstitial cities in Romania can not stop with this paper, especially since an in-depth analysis of the Romanian urban system is required in order to eliminate disparities. Therefore, we foresee the following directions for further research:

- The work may be continued by further study of the subject, addressing not only the technical-utilities side, but also the social side, by studying the social indicators of the population of these settlements, with a view to much more comprehensive correlations regarding the relationship between location and local social conditions;
- The work may be continued by introducing certain parameters (availability, services offered by large urban settlements) to determine how, in fact, the polarizing centers exert an influence on low ranking cities (Podu Iloaiei, although very close to a regional metropolis – Iasi, after applying the criteria, ranked within the class of cities that meet in the lowest degree the NSP criteria);
- The work may be continued by analyzing all the criteria set by NSP and using further statistical methods (principal component analysis, hierarchical ascending classification).

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